

VZCZCXRO3588
PP RUEHCHI RUEHNH RUEHPB
DE RUEHDT #0452/01 2501109
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 071109Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY DILI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2944
INFO RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0669
RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RUEHXX/GENEVA IO MISSIONS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0742
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY 0657
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0495
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0521
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0595
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 0389
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 2275

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 DILI 000452

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EAP/MTS
PACOM FOR POLAD AND JOC
NSC FOR HOLLY MORROW
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [UN](#) [ASEC](#) [TT](#)

SUBJECT: MAJORITY OF DILI'S POPULATION STILL DISPLACED

DILI 00000452 001.2 OF 004

11. (U) Summary: Dili has become a city characterized by a large displaced population residing in over 50 separate camps. Resolving this issue and convincing internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return home is turning out to be a slow and complicated process, partially due to the complexity of the problems and partly due to slow planning and decision making. Despite the current government's emphasis on the issue as a top priority, clear policy decisions on a number of key issues remain outstanding and some confusion has emerged over what is official policy versus political statements. The Government approved a policy framework for IDP return in late August, but implementation coordination has so far fallen short, in part because the policy presumed that it would be safe for the IDPs to return to their neighborhoods. A number of government and civil society agencies are nonetheless implementing IDP return strategies consistent with the framework, but in an ad hoc manner. Most international observers and many Timorese regard these efforts as a positive development, particularly insofar as they focus on a handful of camps that have become bases for gangs that destabilize surrounding neighborhoods. This ad hoc and uneven return strategy, however, will result in a slower and less complete process than had been hoped for, and it also presents a risk that some IDPs will be returned prematurely to areas that are not yet safe. In the meantime, IDP dynamics on the ground are constantly changing as an unknown number of IDPs are either leaving the camps altogether or relocating to other camps. End summary.

A city of the displaced

12. (U) IDP camps have become an entrenched part of Dili life since early May. The city landscape is dotted with over 50 separate campsites, ranging from smaller ones sheltering 100 or fewer to several large camps that have become home to thousands of displaced persons. On any given night it is estimated that

between 50% and 70% of the city's people are sleeping somewhere other than their homes. The camps have also become a central issue in security developments. Camps were from the beginning targets for intimidation by mobs and gangs. Over the last month, this targeting has escalated. Moreover, at least two camps have themselves evolved into staging areas for attacks by groups that commit gang violence in surrounding areas and then retreat to the protection afforded by them. Dili's IDP population, while remaining displaced, is also integrated into city life. Many reside in camps near their original neighborhoods and frequently visit their homes and a large number of camp residents continue in their regular employment.

13. (U) The issues involved in returning people to their homes and reconstituting their communities are complicated and interrelated. Among the issues involved are: layers of conflicting and unresolved land and property claims; community tensions that resulted from large numbers of people moving to Dili in recent years to compete for shrinking resources; a young generation lacking opportunities and feeling increasingly marginalized; and a less than fully functional justice sector, giving rise to a widespread perception that crimes go unpunished. There is a broad consensus that the return of IDPs needs to address this range of issues or risk a return to and/or continuation of similar community conflict.

IDPs are a central political issue

14. (U) Upon his swearing in as Prime Minister, Prime Minister Jose Ramos-Horta placed resolution of the IDP problem at the top of his agenda, stating: "Our immediate task is to consolidate the security in Dili and in all of Timor-Leste, facilitating the return to their houses of the thousands of brothers and sisters who during these weeks have taken refuge in several centers, and giving them necessary support to rebuild their lives." He has continued to highlight the issue, publicly stating that all IDPs should return by the end of September and in several cases

DILI 00000452 002.2 OF 004

pushing for specific camps to be shut down immediately.

15. (U) The IDP issue has also drawn the high level involvement of several key government ministers. Minister of Labor and Community Reinsertion, Arsenio Bano, has taken a high profile in addressing IDP issues since the beginning of the crisis and has been widely praised for his effective coordination of relief efforts. He is the primary government coordinator for planning and coordinating their return. In addition, both Minister of Interior Alcino Barris and Minister for State Administration Ana Pessoa and their respective ministries have taken on high profile roles regarding IDP return planning, particularly with reference to security arrangements.

IDP return policy approved but missing key policy elements

16. (U) Despite this high-level attention, progress has been slow on developing clear and realistic policies for the return of IDPs to their homes. Although a working group comprising representatives from key government and international agencies was formed in mid-July to draft an IDP return policy, it was approved by the Council of Ministers only in late August. The plan, called "Simu Malu" ("receive/accept one another") has four components. First the IDPs' neighborhoods will have to be prepared to accept their return. This component it addresses security arrangements, including international and Timorese police presence in the neighborhoods, as well as dialogue within the receiving communities. The second phase is the preparation of the IDPs themselves to return. This step includes escorted visits of IDPs to their former neighborhoods, as well as further dialogue aimed at reconciliation with other elements in the community. The third step is the return itself and the provision of food and other assistance to the returning IDPs, and the final phase consists of monitoring and continued assistance to the returnees and their communities.

17. (U) Some participants and observers complain that the "Simu Malu" plan does not yet sufficiently address specific practical problems. For example, there remains no clear policy on how to address the land and property issues. Security policies are addressed to some extent, but the plan assumes a far greater international police presence than currently exists in the receiving communities, as well as a speedier return of Timorese police officers (PNTL) to active duty in Dili than appears likely to happen in light of current disagreements about the PNTL screening and reintegration process. Because of these and other unresolved issues, official approval of the Simu Malu plan has not resulted in any noticeable change in implementation on the ground. The IDP return working group, which is now charged with coordinating the implementation, has been changed from a small representative group to a group of all stakeholders that is arguably too large for effective decision making. The meetings of 30 to 40 people during the last two weeks have consisted primarily of presentations by government officials. Many organizations therefore remain confused regarding how to proceed. Some church and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives involved in operating and assisting the camps note, however, that the government plan might for speedy return of IDPs was probably too ambitious in light of ongoing security problems, so that the ongoing delays are on balance not a bad development.

Political leadership sometimes contradictory

18. (SBU) The coordinator of UN humanitarian aid, Finn Reske-Nielsen, expressed to us in early August his concern that both Ramos-Horta and President Xanana Gusmao were giving insufficient attention to the issue of IDP return. Ramos-Horta has since become more engaged, but at times has been viewed as working at cross purposes with the relief agencies on the ground. In August he made a surprise appearance at the camp near the port in the center of downtown Dili, which has been the

DILI 00000452 003.2 OF 004

most frequently cited instance of a camp from which resident gangs commit criminal activities in the surrounding neighborhood, to announce that it was to be shut down within 72 hours. This produced some panic in the camp and a flurry of meetings and in the end the camp remained in place. More recently, Ramos-Horta has made public statements that humanitarian assistance would be suspended in camps identified as ready to close, again producing some uproar among the assistance agencies. Some NGO workers, however, have privately shared with us their agreement with the messages Ramos-Horta is relaying that it is time for IDPs to return home and that justification for many of them to remain in the camps is dwindling.

19. (SBU) A number of other political actors have also taken initiatives apparently uncoordinated with the return planning process, creating some confusion regarding what is official policy versus a political statement. Of particular note is the controversy surrounding the question of whether fixed police posts should be established in neighborhoods throughout Dili to address returnee and community security concerns. Many Timorese have cited this as a necessary step for them to feel secure and key government officials, and substantial police presence in the neighborhoods appears to be a central assumption of the government's "Simu Malu" return plan. However, the leadership of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) have contended that such an approach would absorb virtually all policing resources and is simply "not good policing" from a law enforcement effectiveness perspective. This position has generated widespread criticism from Government of East Timor (GOET) officials, including Ramos-Horta and President Xanana Gusmao, and from ordinary Timorese who complain that the current AFP strategy of responding to house burnings and other gang violence only after they are in progress has neither prevented nor deterred such criminal activities in their neighborhoods. On August 25 policing authority in Dili officially shifted from the

Australian-led international forces to the new United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), and Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Sukehiro Hasegawa has made several public statements promising the establishment of fixed police posts in troubled neighborhoods. AFP sources complained to Embassies that Hasegawa was attempting to pre-empt their objections to this tactic and to create an unrealistic public expectation. The latest development is that the acting UNMIT Police Commissioner has announced the establishment of six police posts in problem neighborhoods as a down payment on the 60 posts that were initially announced.

Meanwhile, reality is moving ahead of the policy process

¶10. (U) Simultaneous with the above policy and planning discussions, the reality on the ground is changing day by day. During the last two weeks there were numerous reports from camp administrators that IDPs had returned home or relocated of their own volition, and various actors were moving forward with facilitating the return of additional IDPs. During the last few days, in response to resurgent violence in some neighborhoods and to tension over the escape of dissident Major Alfredo Reinado and reported sightings of members of the armed forces (FDTL) conducting operations in Dili and elsewhere in what is generally believed to be an effort to recapture Reinado, returns have slowed and some IDPs have returned to their former camps. Camp managers have been unable to accurately quantify the IDP movement, and official counts still place the number of Dili-based IDPs at around 70,000. But the fluidity of the IDP situation means that it has been weeks since this number was quoted with any certainty, and many displaced people are no longer in camps but in homes of friends or relatives. Several anecdotal examples illustrate the various dynamics at work. The camp adjacent to Ramos-Horta's house completely shut down earlier this week when all its residents decided to return home in response to what was reportedly a forceful personal appeal from Ramos-Horta. The camp adjacent to the UNOTIL compound

DILI 00000452 004.2 OF 004

lost about 50 percent of its inhabitants after a series of rock throwing attacks a couple weeks ago; however, those who departed are mostly believed to have relocated to other camps. A number of camps have, in contrast, registered increased populations.

¶11. (U) A number of initiatives to facilitate IDP reintegration into their neighborhoods began prior to the official approval of the policy framework. Both the Ministry and Labor and the Ministry of Interior have been organizing community dialogues in accordance with the draft plan guidelines. In addition, a number of the NGOs working with IDPs decided early on to move ahead with implementing aspects of the plan and not to wait for official approval. The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) country director told us that they and others are "just going ahead and starting". However, she emphasized that this will naturally result in duplication of efforts in some areas and neglect of others, slowing the overall return process.

¶12. (U) Comment: The IDP issue is viewed as the key indicator that things have yet to return to normal. Therefore, it is one of the main issues by which the Ramos-Horta government is likely to be measured. If large numbers of IDPs remain in Dili beyond another month or so, the negative implications for stability and security will continue to increase. In addition, as humanitarian assistance organizations have been pointing out, the continued existence of a large IDP population when the rainy season begins (usually in late fall) could have serious public health consequences. On the other hand, premature return of IDPs to neighborhoods that are not yet secure --- and particularly any violence that should befall such returnees --- could lead to increased instability and set the process back even further. One important next step is for the "Simu Malu" planning process to become more closely coordinated with efforts by GOET, UNMIT, AFP, and others to increase security in the neighborhoods to which IDPs will be returning. End comment.
REES